LOUD SCREAMS

JEZEBEL Q. XIXX

The November 1973 issue of Word Ways included an interesting article about the wordplay of James Thurber. The article cited an observation made by Thurber that a startling affinity or antipathy exists between the letters C and M, when those letters occur as the first letters of words or names. Examples mentioned in the article included CAT and MOUSE, MALICE and CHARITY, and CHAMBERLAIN and MUNICH.

Is there a truly mystical relationship between the letters C and M, or is it possible to find hundreds of similar examples for any combination of two letters, picked entirely at random? It is my belief that an impressive list of examples could be assembled for each one of the 676 different combinations possible, but that's another story.

Inspired to demonstrate the validity of my theory, I set about to list relationships between the letters J and X, beginning with synonym pairs such as these:

- JAUNDICED or XANTHOUS (yellow)
- JIRAJARA or XIRAXARA (designating a certain South American linguistic family)
- JESUS or XP (a designation for Jesus Christ)

It did not, however, take me long to realize that the world is not yet ready for a list of 500 J-X relationships. Consequently, I decided to pick a pair of letters with approximately the same initial frequency as the letters C and M. For this purpose, I examined the following three collegiate dictionaries:

- The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (1971)

In these three dictionaries, words and names beginning with the letters C and M occupy an average collective total of 233 pages per dictionary. Accordingly, for test purposes I selected the letters L and S, which occupy an average of 229 pages per dictionary -- just a trace less.

Word relationships fall into various categories. The first category that I chose for examination was that of coordinate or correlative terms...
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(CAPULET and MONTAGUE, MADONNA and CHILD, etc.). A hap-
hazard listing of the first 50 examples linking the letters L and S that
I found is given next:

LA PAZ and SUCRE (the two capitals of Bolivia)
LIBEL (written defamation) and SLANDER (oral defamation)
LOS ANGELES and SAN FRANCISCO (the two largest cities of Cali-
ifornia, and on the west coast of North America)
LIZARDS and SNAKES (the two principal representatives of the rep-
tilian order Squamata)
LUCIFER (the rebel archangel before his fall) and SATAN (the re-
bel archangel after his fall)
LINE (a one-dimensional space) and SURFACE (a two-dimensional
space)
LEBANON and SYRIA (the two nations formed out of the former
French mandate of La Syrie)
LAKE and STREAM (the two basic types of inland bodies of fresh
water)
LAMB (an immature ovine) and SHEEP (a mature ovine)
LOUIS and SCHMELING (two heavyweight boxing champions of the
world who met twice in the ring)
SERGEANT and LIEUTENANT (two consecutive army officer ranks)
LEMON and SUGAR (the two enhancements commonly added to tea)
SHAKESPEARE and LAMB (the play and prose versions of the same
dramatic works)
LAKE (an inland body of water) and SEA (a body of water connected
with an ocean)
LIE and SIT (to assume one of the two basic resting positions)
LOYALTY ISLANDS and SOCIETY ISLANDS (the two French island
groups in the southern Pacific)
STUDY (to seek knowledge) and LEARN (to acquire knowledge)
LINCOLN and SEWARD (a President and his Secretary of State,
both victims of the same assassination plot)
LIMINAL (at the threshold of perception) and SUBLIMINAL (below
the threshold of perception)
LIBYA and SUDAN (the two African nations bordering on Egypt)
LUNCH and SUPPER (light meals providing an alternative to dinner)
LADDER (a portable series of steps used in climbing) and STAIR-
CASE (a fixed series of steps used in climbing)
LENIN and STALIN (the first two great leaders of the Soviet Union)
LARYNX and SYRINX (the true larynx and the lower larynx in birds)
LANE (a country road) and STREET (a city thoroughfare)
LOIRE and SEINE (the two longest rivers entirely within France)
LIVER and SPLEEN (the two vascular, glandlike, abdominal organs
closely associated with the circulatory system)
LORAN and SHORAN (navigation systems used by ships and planes)
SPUTNIK and LUNIK (class names for the first two series of Rus-
sian space vehicles)
LOVE and SEX (the emotional and the physical aspects of human re-
production)
LAMBITUS (cunnilingus) and SOIXANTE-NEUF (double cunnilingus)
LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY and SAINT VALENTINE'S DAY (the two
mutually unrelated holidays of the year chronologically nearest to each other)

SMILE (to look with amusement) and LAUGH (to find amusement in something)

STEM and LIMBS (the principal woody parts of a tree visible above the ground)

LEDA and the SWAN (a popular subject of Renaissance and later art)

LOOK (to seek visual perceptions) and SEE (to experience visual perceptions)

STEINITZ and LASKER (the first two officially recognized world chess champions: between them, they held the title for 55 years, two more years than all of their nine successors)

LAUNCH (to start a boat on its way) and SAIL (to continue moving a boat on its way)

SPAIN and LUSITANIA (the two nations of the Iberian peninsula)

LENINGRAD and STALINGRAD (the largest Russian cities under simultaneous and prolonged German siege in World War II but not captured)

LIGHT (that which is seen) and SOUND (that which is heard)

LIBERALS and SOCIALISTS (the middle ground between Conservatives and Communists)

LABOR (an investment toward a goal) and SUCCESS (the return on that investment)

The next category to engage my attention was that of antonyms or opposites (McKinley and CZOLGOSZ, CAPITALISM and MARXISM, etc.). Again, a list of my first 50 discoveries follows:

LONG and SHORT.

LARGE and SMALL.

LOUD and SOFT.

LAND and SEA.

LIBERTY and SLAVERY.

LIQUID (above the melting point) and SOLID (below the melting point).

LORD (God, often preceded by "The") and SATAN (the Devil).

LOGS (the initial product of a tree) and SAWDUST (the final product).

LIE (to be in horizontal position) and STAND (to be in vertical position).

LIBERAL (generous) and STINGY.

LAY ASIDE (to save) and SPEND.

LISTLESS (spiritless) and SPIRITED.

LIVELY (full of movement) and STILL (devoid of movement).

LACK (deficiency)

SOONER (near)

LIGHT-CHEARTED.

SMOOTH (even)

SANITY and LUNACY.

LAX (not strict)

LOOSE (not紧)

LIBERIA.

LEMONY (sour)

LOQUACIOUS.

LEGITIMATE.

LUST (condemned)

LEASE (to convey temporary possession of a thing) and ASSOCIATE.

LUNAR (of the moon).

LIE AWAY.

LEAD (a baton)

LANDLUBBER.

LISTEN (to sound)

LAVISH (profligate)

LEVEL and UNLEVEL.

LAUGHING and UNLAUGHING.

LANCUOR.

LIGHT and SHADOW.

LINK (to join) and UNLINK.

LUSH (plenteous)

LUCK (chance)

SIR (gentleman)

SAFE (harmless)

LACKLUSTRE.

LOYALTY (devotion)

LAND (below)

STRAIGHT.

The third category of interest is that of synonyms (or close associates): MARXISM, etc.

LITTLE or
The third category of relationships to come under my scrutiny was that of synonyms or equals (CHANGE or MODIFY, COMMUNISM or MARXISM, etc.). My first 50 finds:

LACK (deficiency) and SURFEIT (excess)
SOONER (nearer in time) and LATER (further away in time)
LOUP-CERVIER (a New World lynx) and SYAGUSH (an Old World lynx)
LITERAL (not figurative) and SYMBOLIC (figurative)
LIGHTHEARTED (gay) and SERIOUS (not gay)
SMOOTH (even) and LUMPY (uneven)
SANITY and LUNACY (insanity)
LENIENT and STRICT
LOOSE (not dense or compact) and SOLID (dense or compact)
LIBERIA (a tropical land) and SIBERIA (an arctic land)
LEMONY (sour) and SUGARY (sweet)
LOQUACIOUS (noisy) and SILENT
LEGITIMATE (genuine) and SPURIOUS (not genuine)
LOST (condemned to eternal punishment) and SAVED (rescued from eternal punishment)
LEASE (to convey property to someone else while retaining ownership) and SELL (to convey property to someone else, relinquishing its ownership)
LUNAR (of the heavenly body that shines at night) and SOLAR (of the heavenly body that shines during the day)
LIE AWAKE and SLEEP
LEAD (a base metal) and SILVER (a noble or precious metal, often associated with lead in ores)
LANDLUBBER and SAILOR
LISTEN (to be the recipient of sound) and SPEAK (to be the source of sound)
LAVISH (profuse in expenditure) and SPARING (economical in expenditure)
LEVEL and SLOPING (away from the level)
LAUGHING and SOBBING
LANGUOR (lack of vigor) and SPIRIT (vigor)
LIGHT and SHADE (darkness)
LINK (to connect) and SEVER (to disconnect)
LUSH (plentiful) and SCARCE
LUCK (chance leading to success) and SKILL (the antithesis of chance leading to success)
SIR (gentleman) and LADY
SAFE (harmless) and LETHAL (causing death)
LORD (a master of servants) and SERVANT
LACKLUSTER (dull) and SCINTILLATING (sparkling)
LOYALTY (faithfulness to the government) and SEDITION (insurrection against the government)
LAND (below one's feet) and SKY (above one's head)
STRAIGHT (not curved) and LOOPED (curved)

LITTLE or SMALL
A future article will deal with other L-S relationships: whole/part, general/specific, cause/effect, principal/subsidiary, and so forth.